

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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O R 231750Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7592
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: XM, OREP
SUBJECT: CODEL REUSS

REF: SANTIAGO 10215

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PRESIDENT PINCOHET'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NATIONAL PLEBISCITE (SEE SANTIAGO 10215), THE GOC HAS NOW SET JANUARY 4 AS DATE FOR THIS EVENT. AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE WE WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO CODEL REUSS VISIT AND HAD BEGUN EXTENSIVE PLANNING ON A DIVERSE PROGRAM. THE PLEBISCITE, WHICH COINCIDES EXACTLY WITH DATE OF CODEL VISIT, AS WELL AS THE POLITICAL AND PRACTICAL CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING THIS EVENT, NOW ALTER THE PICTURE ENTIRELY. MOST RELUCTANTLY, WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT WE MUST RECOMMEND AGAINST THIS VISIT AT THIS TIME ON THE FOLLOWING GROUNDS:

2. MECHANICAL CONSIDERATIONS. VOTING IS OBLIGATORY; AND THIS WILL TAKE PRIORITY OVER ALL BUT THE MOST BASIC SERVICES. ACCORDING TO CUSTOM, THE DAY HAS BEEN DECLARED A NATIONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WORK HOLIDAY. THEREFORE, WE FORESEE SOME, ALTHOUGH NOT INSURMOUNTABLE, PROBLEMS IN OBTAINING BASIC ACCOMMODATION SERVICES, APPOINTMENTS AND TRANSPORTATION. MOREOVER, THERE WILL BE NO WORK ACTIVITY AT THE IDB PROJECTS WHICH IT IS THE COMMITTEE'S INTENTION TO VISIT. FOR INSTANCE, THE AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE IN SAN FELIPE AS WELL AS ITS ASSOCIATED FARMS WILL BE CLOSED DOWN FOR THE ENTIRE DAY.

3. GOC CRITICS' DELICATE POSITION. CODEL HAD EXPRESSED STRONG INTEREST IN MEETING WITH CARDINAL SILVA, THE VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY, PRESIDENT FREI, AND OTHER GOC CRITICS. BUT THE PLEBISCITE NOW PLACES THEM IN A PARTICULARLY DELICATE POSITION. THE GOVERNMENT HAS CAST THE ISSUE AS A DEFENSE OF CHILE'S DIGNITY IN THE FACE OF INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION BASED IN LARGE MEASURE ON DAMAGING INFORMATION ABOUT CHILE CIRCULATED BY THESE VERY VOICES. THE GOVERNMENT HOPES TO CAPITALIZE ON CHILEAN CHAUVINISM TO GAIN ENDORSEMENT FOR ALL THE REGIME'S POLICIES. IN THIS HIGHLY CHARGED ATMOSPHERE, DOMESTIC CRITICS CANNOT BE SEEN TO BE "CONSPIRING" WITH THOSE FOREIGN ELEMENTS (SUCH AS OUR CONGRESS) ACCUSED OF INTERVENING. THE VICARIATE HAS SPECIFICALLY TOLD US IT COULD NOT AFFORD TO RECEIVE THE CODEL DURING THE LATE DECEMBER-JANUARY PERIOD. THE CARDINAL PROBABLY AGREES WITH THIS POSITION AS DO CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, LABOR, AND YOUTH LEADERS.

4. FOREIGN OBSERVERS. AS NOTED REFTEL PINOCHET CUT FROM HIS DECEMBER 21 ADDRESS THE PARAGRAPH WHICH WOULD HAVE INVITED THE UN TO ACCREDIT OBSERVERS TO THE JANUARY 4 VOTE. DESPITE THEIR RULING OUT THAT IDEA THE GOC MAY ATTEMPT TO CAPITALIZE ON THE PRESENCE OF US CONGRESSMEN JANUARY 4 TO SUBSTANTIATE ITS CLAIMS THAT THE ELECTION WAS FREELY AND FAIRLY CONDUCTED. WE DO NOT NEED TO PREJUDGE THAT ISSUE. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT THE CONGRESSMEN MAY BE "USED" FOR PURPOSES THAT ARE NEITHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEIRS NOR IN THE INTEREST OF U.S. POLICY. WHATEVER THEY SAY, OR DO NOT SAY, WILL BE SUBJECT TO MISINTERPRETATION HERE AND ABROAD.

5. IDB ATTITUDE. WE HAVE ADVISED THE LOCAL IDB REPRESENTATIVE (EUGENIO ALBARRAN) OF OUR NEGATIVE RECOMMENDATION. HE, TOO, HAD BEEN CONCERNED OVER PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SEEMED RELIEVED AT NEWS OF OUR RECOMMENDATION. HE WILL ADVISE HIS OWN HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON OF EMBASSY'S POSITION.

6. SCHEDULING PROBLEM. IN CONSIDERING THIS RECOMMENDATION, WE ALSO EXAMINED THE POSSIBILITY OF ADVANCING OR POSTPONING THE VISIT IN ORDER NOT TO CONFLICT WITH THE PLEBISCITE. AS NOTED ABOVE, THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION'S RELUCTANCE TO SEE FOREIGN VISITORS EXTENDS A WEEK IN EITHER DIRECTION. MOREOVER, A VISIT TIMED TO AVOID THE PLEBISCITE BY JUST ONE DAY MIGHT ALSO BE SUBJECT TO MISINTERPRETATION. WE DO NOT SEE ANY CONVENIENT WAY FOR THIS CODEL TO MAKE THEIR VISIT TO CHILE AT A DATE SUFFICIENTLY FAR REMOVED FROM THE PLEBISCITE.

7. CONCLUSION. IT IS WITH RELUCTANCE AND DISAPPOINTMENT THAT WE MAKE THIS NEGATIVE RECOMMENDATION. WE HOPE THAT CODEL

WILL BE ABLE TO RESCHEDULE THEIR VISIT TO CHILE. WE KNOW
THAT THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS ALL OTHER CHILEANS
INVOLVED WITH THE ECONOMIC EXPERIMENT HERE (FOR AND
AGAINST) ARE ANXIOUS TO RECEIVE AMERICANS OF THE STATURE OF
CODEL. WE ASSURE CODEL THAT SUCH A VISIT AT A LATER TIME WOULD
BE VERY MUCH WORTHWHILE EVEN IF SCHEDULED AS A SEPARATE
TRIP.
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